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Tio's Game

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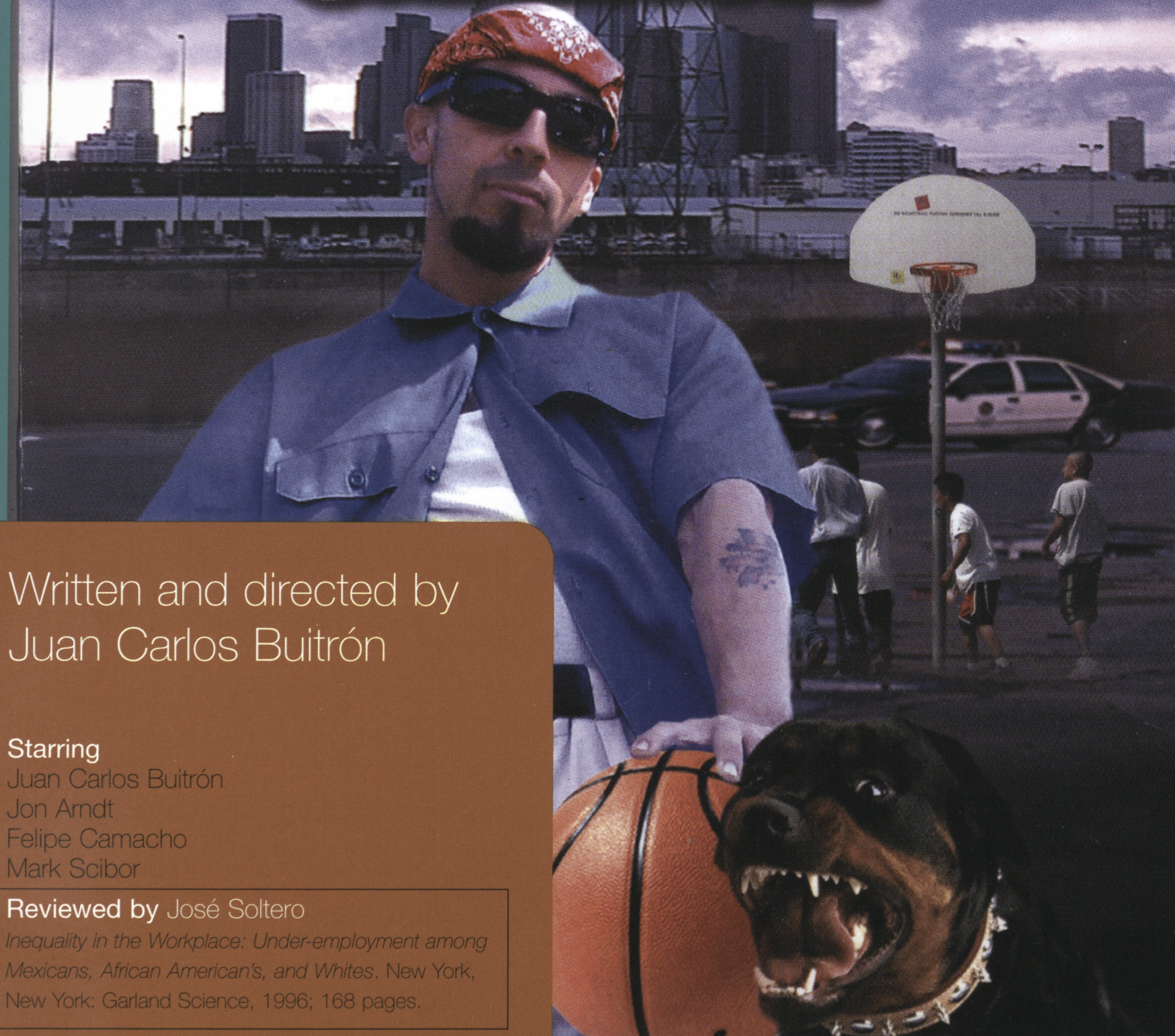
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10's GAME



Written and directed by
Juan Carlos Buitrón

Starring

Juan Carlos Buitrón
Jon Arndt
Felipe Camacho
Mark Scibor

Reviewed by José Soltero

*Inequality in the Workplace: Under-employment among
Mexicans, African American's, and Whites.* New York,
New York: Garland Science, 1996; 168 pages.

Tio's Game is an insightful low budget movie about survival in a gang-infested neighborhood of Chicago. This is the story of two Latino brothers, Juan and Martin, who are trying each in their own way, to survive and reach for a better life after their mother dies and their father goes to prison for drug addiction and drug dealing.

In contrast to most gang movies, with high levels of violence, action, and sex scenes that make most of them very artificial and predictable, Tio's Game works because the story, acting, and scenery are very realistic and plausible. The pace of the movie is slow for the standards of gang movie genre, but the viewers are compensated by watching actors who are very believable in their roles and contradictions.

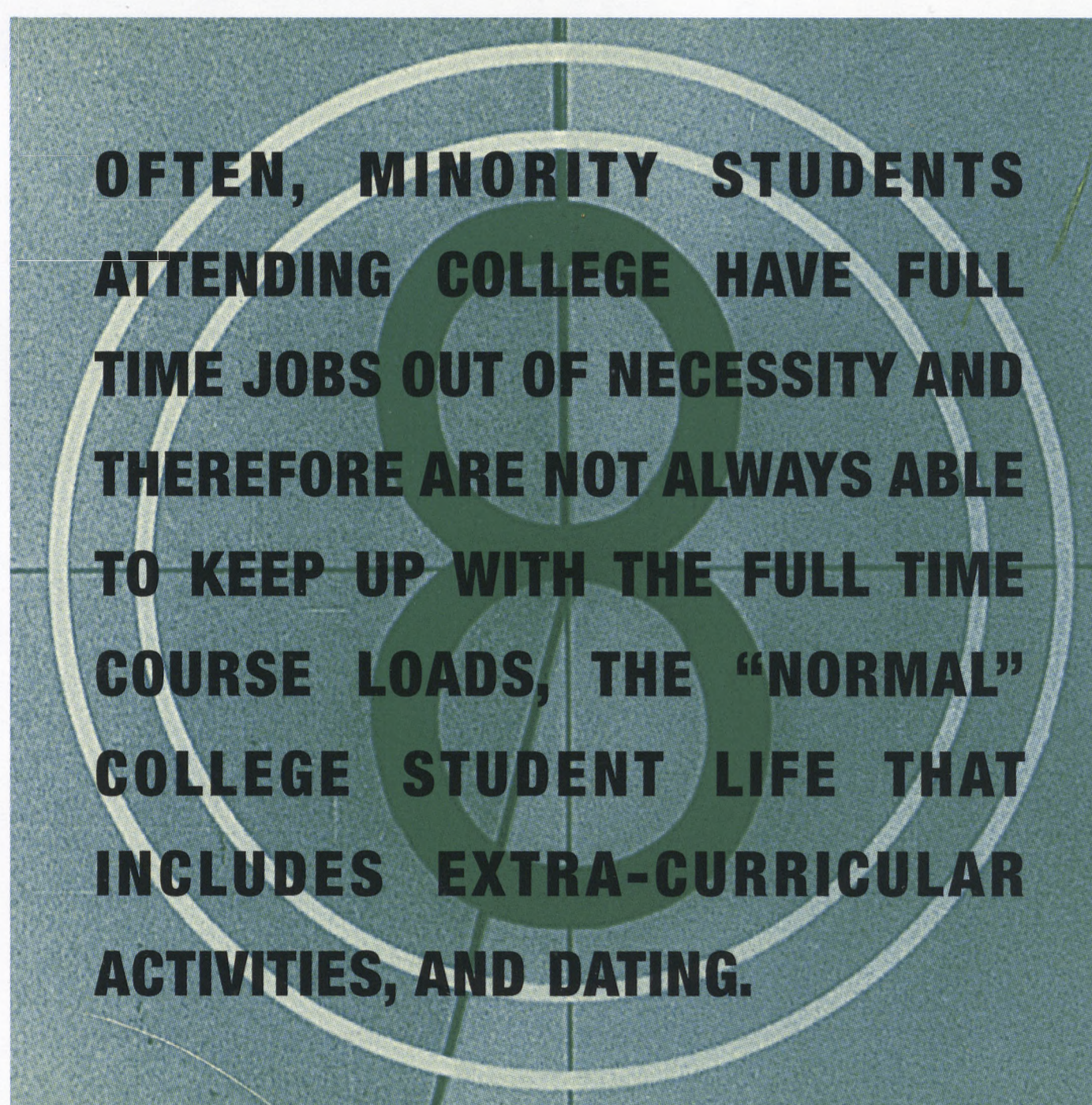
Christian, the older of the two brothers, is a college student — the university Christian is attending is DePaul University — for whom the responsibility of going through college, keeping a job, and supporting his younger brother comes to a difficult point when he loses his job, his brother Martin starts hanging out with a neighborhood gang, and both Christian and Martin experience serious problems in college and high school, respectively, due to all these distractions.

The movie depicts some of the problems that many minority students face in urban areas. Often, minority students attending college have full time jobs out of necessity and therefore are not always able to keep up with the full time course loads, the "normal" college student life that includes extra-curricular activities, and dating. In addition, living in areas of high poverty and unemployment exposes these students to diversion and pressures that other, middle class students do not confront, such as gangs and having family members involved in drug dealing and/or consumption. Thus, the movie suggests some potential factors that affect Latinos' high school and college drop out problems: poverty and the necessity to work full time; the need

to provide for family dependents since an early age; lack of networks to help them find good jobs and school support; and the presence of gangs in the neighborhoods where they live.

In addition, the movie also takes into account the ethnic/racial diversity in the city of Chicago. Christian's girlfriend is a white student he met in college, but Martin, still a high school student, dates a Latina and does not approve of his brother dating a "white girl." Furthermore, some of Christian's best friends from college are not Latinos; one of them is Asian American, and the other is white. However, in its own way,

interested in helping his two nephews. Christian, on the other hand, rejects his uncle's offers of help and tries to survive on his own, in part, because he blames his uncle for some of the troubles that sent his father to jail. He cannot avoid feeling revolted by his uncle's presence. Despite being a college student, Christian's frustration and anger when the members of the neighborhood gang beat up his brother rises to the point where he takes a gun, finds the gang, and points the gun to the head of the gang's leader. It is at this defining point that Christian's uncle shows up and convinces his nephew not to kill the gang's leader.



In the end, in a very Sartrean way, Christian chooses to abandon the violent path, disposes of the gun, and decides to move in with his girlfriend so that both can continue to attend college. In this way, the movie breaks up with the cliché of the fatalistic stories of Latinos in the barrio who cannot avoid failing while being overwhelmed by the circumstances of their life.

Tio's game is worthwhile and refreshing, particularly because of very believable and complex characters in this movie. Tio's Game is available in DVD (\$14.99) and other formats at www.yorkentertainment.com or by calling 1-800-84-MOVIE.

Martin's neighborhood's gang also shows another ethnic dimension of Chicago: the gang includes Latinos, African Americans and white young men and women. Inadvertently, the movie depicts what some research on Latino gangs in Chicago has established: the multiple ethnic/racial acceptance into predominantly Latino gangs.

The characters in Tio's Game are not one-dimensional or predictable. Juan's uncle ("tio" in Spanish), the character that gives the name to the movie, is a wealthy, well known drug dealer, who commands fear in the neighborhood where the two brothers live. However, despite Tio's twisted deals and problems with the police, he is honestly

Juan Buitron currently works at DePaul University. For the past two years, he has been involved with DePaul's School for New Learning BA Program with a double-major focus in Film and Business Management. In 1997, he formed Genuine Productions, Inc. (www.gpichicago.com), with the intention of producing his first script "Tio's Game." After its initial completion in 2001, Tio's Game was featured at the Gene Siskel Film Center for Latino Film Month and the Digital Underground Film Festival in San Francisco. He is only one of two Latinos in Chicago's history to produce, write AND direct a feature film. Also, he is working to produce and act in his second film later this year. Contact him at jbuitron@depaul.edu